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LETTERS FROM THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE TO HON. HENRY LAURENS, 1777-1780.

(Continued from the January number.)

[28]

Albany the 28th march 1778

Dear Sir

inclos'd I have the honor to send you by doctor *treat* the bills of exchange destinated for the Canadian expedition— I expect every day to hear from Congress and whatever will be theyr decision I schall go to his excellency's camp— my being so much disappointed once has made me rather cautious and I do'nt want to embark myself in any romantic avanture— the command of fish kill I no more think of because I hear to day it was given *before my letter was receiv'd* to a worthy, honest, and good officer who by his being a new yorker can do much better than any other— therefore, sir, the day after to morrow will see me going down even when I schould not have got any answer from Congress— its tenor will regulate my being or not being an officer in the army, but it schall not prevent my being Near my friend and running every where honor and glory will call me.

the doctor bearer of this letter I may give an high character to on account of the good order I have found in the hospitals— with the greatest regard I have the honor to be

dear sir
Your Most obedient Servant
the M[is] de Lafayette

I am told a general exchange is
to take place and wish it be for our advantage
the honorable Mr laurens &c &c turn'd the 30
I have receiv'd to day the answer of Congress and also the order from gnl washington to come down, and schall set out tomorrow morning.

Endorsed: Marqu. delafayette
28 March 1778
Rec[d] 14 April—
Answ[d] 17[th]—

[29]

Addressed: to
the honorable Mr Laurens esq. president
of Congress
at
York town

Camp at Walley forge 10[th] april 1778

Dear sir

I received in the same time the letter of his excellency to come back to his camp, also the answer of Congress by Colonel Armand, and I sat of immediately for head quarters— by the rumours of albany and the news of the diligent exertions in every state, I was in hopes to find the army amounting to a very respectable number.

you remember, sir, when I arrived at philadelphia that I have alwais mention'd a french officer *of my*

family Mr *Capitaine* of the rgt of aquitaine, who on account of his being sick had been left in Carolina when I came through those states, and for reasons too long to explain was never sent for till this moment— It is to you, sir, that I have the obligation of his being in york— the engagement he has made with m^{r} deane was to be a capitaine whose commission and appointments would run since october 1 1776— when those engagements didnt meet with the approbation of Congress it was promised that Mr Copitaine would be looked on in a different light— I leave entirely to Congress what they will think proper to do for him, but beg leave to observe that officers who have no more seen the fire of the last campaign have been promoted to much higher ranks.

I take also the Liberty of reccommending to Congress a gentleman Mr de second who has been introduced to me by the desire of my father in law the duke dayen, and I beg you would mention my desire of seeing him employed— Count de pulaski has told me he would make him a Captain in his Legion which if Congress approves of it will suit that gentleman very well.

I have no doubt but that Count de pulaski will obtain what he desires— if ever a good active, indefatigable officer, a brave and honest man as far as these expressions can be extended, and a man of notice and reputation in the world is entitled to the Consideration of Congress the count deserves it on every respect—

with the greatest regard I have the honor to be

Sir

Your most obedient servant

the M^{is} de Lafayette

Endorsed: Marquis delafayette

10 april 1778 Rec^{d}. 13th

[30]

camp at valley forge 14 april 1778

N. b. do not forget Mr du
plessis's resolve, with the two lines
from Mr. president's hand:

Dear Sir

I am now writing to you from my old ground, and I wish I had never seen the northern ones— by that expedition (besides what disagreament it brings in itself) I have only got many ennemys, much trouble, and I have been prevented from doing such good in my division as my presence could have afforded— by this time I dare say you have received a kind of resignation from the *baron de kalb*— he wants to go home— it is fo far, my dear sir, from here to france— I wish very much that Congress would not loose any time in falling upon such plans as could give zeal to the officers, some pride and life to all the army and prevent that *resignating sickness* propagated through the whole continent— It has been the case in many republics, it has been also a vice in the army of the english kingdom that the troops di'nt meet with that Consideration which constitutes theyr pride and entertain useful prejudices— how stronger will be the Country when düe respect is pay'd not only to the quality of an officer but also to the noble existence of a soldier?

I did not speack yet to You of the letter I have received from Congress, and schould be glad to know your private opinion about it— however I see very plainly that Congress is very far from ever thinking of any thing they could believe fit for displeasing me— you will confess there has been some miss in the form.

with the greatest impatience I expect those of committee of Congress who I understand are to come back with decisive answers for the regulation of the army—

I wish'd every thing could be upon a proper footing and we could know in which way things will be managed during the campaign so that every one may know what he is to command and begin to put his department in order

there has been some idea of creating lieutenant generals— I do not at all approve of the measure as I know it will make noises, disatisfactions, and jealousies which are already too much spent upon the Continent— if the promotion was to be made by date of commissions those whom it schall stop will play the devil— if not, the affair will be much worse— I think as we are likely to have but four or five major generals at most the best way would be to have the army divided in so many divisions as it was under the marshal of *broglio*— then congress schould fill up all the vacancies of brigadier generals, reinforce the regiments and lessen the number of officers, because officers are pay'd by the Country for six times more men than we have in fact— one other thing, my dear sir, I am much concerned for, is to see how slowly we receive those reinforcements and those so magnified drafts.

You know by this time the ill succes's of the negotiations Concerning the exchange— the only aim of the ennemy is to involve us into some shameful *faux pas* to ruin us by ourselves, to create divisions, jealousies, and renew that foolish idea of a reconciliation with great britain upon honest and safe terms— I am afraïd they will by the bye corrupt and deceive the narrow and incautious minds of some *even good men*, and I believe any correspondence schould be broken up— that people we must never speak to but with fire and swords in our hands— for our prisoners, the only way to stop theyr monstrous barbarites will be the most strict and merciless retaliation.

I have seen the prussian baron who seems a sensible, good, disinterested man, and takes good deal of trouble

to teach the soldiers some of our european maneuvres and regulations.

general gates is, I am told, very angry against me— that I cannot help— frankly I have sayd what I have coldly seen, and there are in the world more powerfull men than M^{r} gates who have heard from me disagreable truths— but I am so far of any resentment, so far of being pleased with that state of bad understanding, that I am ready to be general gates's good friend, forgive the northern rediculous expedition, and even be of any service to him where the interest of the country and this of men I love better will not be Compromised. with a great concern I hear that Sir william is to be called at home as that gentleman would be a great loss for america— but I hope this will be only a flying report.

I had the intention of sending to you the receipts of the monney I have pay'd on public account which is pretty high— that is chiefly for officers who wanted a part of theyr pay to join theyr regiments, who were sent on command and had not a farthing— many of them I have neglected to take the receipt from, but it is my fault— I have also taken some monney from the public chest for an officer of rations— but very unhappily I cannot find those papers, and am affraid they have been left in governor clinton's or ge'nl m^{c}dougall's quarters— I am going to chearch them, but in expecting they would be found I intend to pay what I owe— what is düe to me will be pay'd when it will please to god as I am much more concerned for the former part— I expect to hear to day or to morrow from M^{r} de francy who in a very obliging manner has desired me to take monney from him upon whatever terms I'll choose to direct— as soon as it will come to hand I schall settle my debts to the public— I was a little

schort of monney as that fine journey has cost of extro'rdinary to me, in advancing money to officers, in paying some public accounts, in giving to the indians, &c &c about twelve thousand dollars more than I schould have expended— *that only between us.*

will you be so good as to forward the two inclosed letters to my brigadier generals who are both gone home— I make them some reccommandations about the troops who are to come— I foresee that among the plenty of clothes we schall want, there will be an immense disagreable, dusty, unholsome deficiency of schirts and linen.

with the most tender affection and highest regard I have the honor to be

Your most obedient servant
the M[is] de Lafayette

Endorsed: Marquis delafayette
14[th]. April 1778 Rec[d]. 26[th]—

[31]

Camps Near Valley forge 21[st] april 1778

Dear Sir

I will beg leave to trouble again the honorable Congress on account of a letter I have reciev'd from Colonel Armand now in boston— that gentleman especially distinguished by his personal bravery and his zeal and activity as an officer was allowed to raise one other independent corps before the canadian expedition was planed— he had since the project of inlisting his men in Canada, and has not been the only one whose flattering expectations have been strangely disappointed— he is gone on to boston where hopes says he to raise an independant corps of americans, frenchmen, and foreigners deserters (or prisoners) if leave is granted him— his desire would be also to be annexed to some state where

he could get the bounty allowed per-inlisted man— some advance of money schould be delivered to him— Colonel Armand wants too the few men who compose his old corps schould be returned in the new one— such are, sir, the different articles of his letter which I have presented to his excellency gnl washington— but the general directs me to apply to you as some points had been previously settled, and some others want the authority of Congress to enable him to give a decisive answer.

I am Convinced his excellency will be glad to oblige C^{lol} armand, and for my own part I beg the h^{nl} Congress to take the matter into consideration and let me know theyr orders for that gentleman which I schall immediately forward.

as I am going to write to friends and relations of mine who may have some influence in a certain Court, I take this opportunity of asking in which terms and stile it would be better to turn my ideas upon the present circumstances— that reflexion of mine is dictated by my ardent love for our noble cause— do'nt you think, sir, that the present appearant alteration, and trouble in the english parliament, (thö to be laughed at till some thing more solid will be presented) can be usefully employ'd in precipitating a more particular declaration from the court of france— that I wish very heartily as I think it is Consistent with the interests and glory of my Country— I beg also leave to observe that your ambassadors in france have spoken in too high terms of the strength of America— I aprehend the general idea is that we do not want any stronger help, but this of the usual supplyes of arms, powder &c that may be true, sir, that is certainly trüe were proper exertions alwaïs ememployed, but I do not believe that way of speacking schould be ours with men of influence in a country

whose the taking a part *more decisive yet* in the Contest is if not necessary, at least very useful.

I am very sorry that the difficulty of receiving letters, and principally the danger they run through before arriving prevent me from giving to Congress such intelligences from home as I could wish— I fear also that the printing of a letter from the marshal de mouchy and the loss of one from the duke de choiseuïl will disgust my friends from writing upon public business.

I have the honor to give joy to Congress upon the Compliment pay'd to America by the strange speech of Lord north— his saying that he *had alwais in mind to give good terms to this country had he been successfull, that americans will be more free in being dependant than independant* tho' pretty old sentences, do'nt surprise me so much than to hear him Confess how deceived he has been in his ideas opon the strength of America— whatever confidence I may have in theyr Candor I think there must be under hand some very black scheme— he ca'nt *fight us out* but hopes to *negotiate us out* of our rights, he wants to make friends to the government by foolish hopes, he entertains those trhyce unhappy and dreadfull ideas of division among ourselves— he wants to deceive the *good* and arm the *wicked*, and to asleep the Congress and the states till his reinforcements will be ready— if he sincerily wishes peace upon such terms as any one can accept without ruin and personal as well as national dishonor let him withdraw his troops and treat afterwards— I think or *that a french war is declared* or that *england is obliged to try her escape behind low vile artifices.* in both cases I schall have the happinness to see that independency I came so far to fight for, freely ascertained, because I do'nt doubt but that Congress Conscious of our being near the decisive moment will schortly rein-

force the hands of this general *whose plans* give so much trouble to his ministerial Lordship.

as I am also going to write to Mr *charles fox* a letter which will certainly circulate in the opposition, I schall be extremely obliged to you, sir, to give me some instructions on that subject which I will also follow in a a letter to Lord Schelburne

I beg a thousand pardons to you, sir, and to the Congress for my being so long and perhaps tedious in this letter— but my pen went faster than my reflexion— however I think any warm lover of liberty has the right of speaking to those who have in theyr hands the safety, the glory of his mistress— if ever I am of some service to the Congress my only reward will alwaïs be the pleasure of telling them how sincerely I am devoted to the interests of the states

with the highest regards I have the honor to be

Sir

Your most obedient servant

the m[is] de Lafayette

we have just now a pretty certain entelligence that independence is declared in france

Endorsed: Marquis delafayette
21 April 1778
Rec[d] 24

[32]

Addressed: private Letter
to the honorable henry Laurens esq. president of Congress
at
York town

Camp at Walley forge 24[th] april 1778

Dear Sir

receive my sincere thanks for all the marks of politness Mr Capitaine has been honöred with by you—

very heartly I take my part of his greatfulness, and all my obligations to you are so great since I have the pleasure of your acquaintance that I would be tedious was I to express my aknowledgement as I resent it and at every occasion I have to thank my good friend Mr Laurens.

(between you and me) I Schould have been happy had Mr Capitaine been left to me for drawing the last campaign as far as possible and for to begin the next one— but if he is thought useful any where else I have no objection to his going, and am very glad he is imployed if no other can do the business— however I want him be considered as *mine* because he was given to me by the marshal and count de broglio to whom he was belonging before they attached him to me as a present— such a gentleman will be very useful to mewhen the business of the susquehana schall be done, and by the same reason to the common wheale—As his expenses have been very high Congress will pay what they think proper and if not all I schall pay the remains.

I do'nt know who has lately told that I was going to france but if nothing extraordinary happens I intend to disappoint the news makers.

I understand general Gates is coming to camp— god grant it may put in order the head of the old gentleman about a certain friend of us— they say also that the committee from Congress will come soon with powers of regulating the army— let them set out soon, my dear friend, for it is most time to be in some kind of order. there is one regulation about dividing the army in *two wings* and a *second* line which either myself either the baron de Steuben dislike very much, and we think it would be ten times better to have the excellent order adopted last war by the *marechal de broglio* to have the army in four or six divisions each

of 'em under the command of a l^te^ g^nl^ (here a major general) who had two brigades of the first and two of the second line alltogether, so that he Could be sustained and reinforced by the part of 2^d^ line behind him in his own way— without that he can not so much answer for the event— one other thing is (between us) that we have very few officers able to command the third part of the army at once— by the other way there is only the 4^th^ or 6^th^ besides a very desirable emulation among the divisions— that I give like an idea of mine reconforted by the ideas of the best generals in europe but *under the most strictest law of* secrecy as I do'nt like to interfere in any business beyond my line

I will not detain the Capitaine an instant and I intend to have the pleasure to write this evening by my valet de chambre who isgoing to york. with the most tender affection and highest regard I have the honor to be

dear sir

Your most obedient servant
the M^is^ de Lafayette

Endorsed:[1] The Marquis de la Fayette
Camp 24^th^ April 1778.

[*To be continued in the next number of this magazine.*]

[1]In handwriting of Moses Young, secretary of Henry Laurens.